

Earth from Space Exhibit

UNO's Criss Library hosts a photo gallery exhibit on loan from the Smithsonian Institute.

ENTERTAINMENT
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gateway

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA SINCE 1913

Men's Basketball

Mavs open conference play with a 80-72 victory over Washburn.

SPORTS
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VOLUME 09 | ISSUE 25

FRIDAY | DECEMBER 4, 2009

PKI to honor computer science education

HOLLY FREDRICKSON
STAFF WRITER

The Peter Kiewit Institute will join colleges across the country in celebrating National Computer Science Education Week next week, from Dec. 7 until Dec. 11.

Congress passed a resolution earlier this year to officially recognize the economic and technological contributions of the field of computer science during the week of Dec. 9, the birthday of famous computer scientist Grace Hopper.

"I feel like computer science is somewhat overlooked," said Qiuming Zhu, chair of the computer science department at PKI. "People don't understand how important computer science is to IT, but Congress' resolution makes it very clear that computer science is a driving force of IT and the economy."

Computer Science Education Week will kick off on Monday at 10:30 a.m. in the PKI atrium. Featured guest speakers include senior vice chancellor Terry Hynes and Chris Russell, manager of Google's data center in Council Bluffs. From 11:30 to 12:30, student awards will be presented and refreshments will be served. Corporate and sponsor presentations will take place 1:30 to 5 p.m. and all day Tuesday.

On Friday, David Weiss of Iowa State University will be available in PKI room 164 for an IS&T roundtable discussion about software engineering from 11:30 to 1 p.m.

National Computer Science Education Week will wrap up Friday afternoon with a High School Challenge Computer Science Bowl from 3 to 5 p.m. Participating high schools include Bellevue East, Gross Catholic, Westside, Omaha North, Bennington and Auburn. Displays of research done by computer science students and faculty will also be on display all week.

UNO hosts events for first citywide World AIDS Day

EMILY JOHNSON
NEWS EDITOR

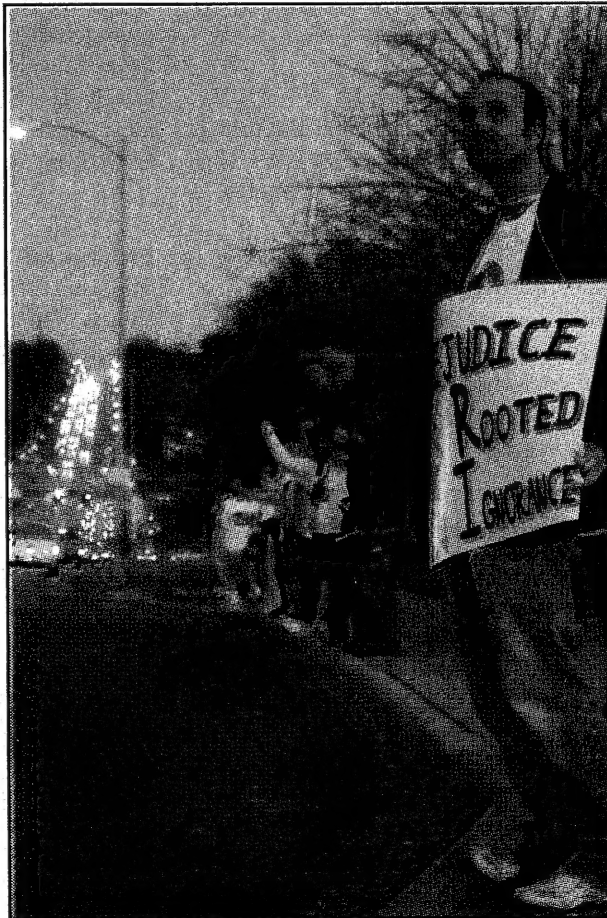
UNO's Service Learning Academy teamed up with Omaha Public Schools and local community organizations to host Omaha's first citywide collaborative effort to bring awareness to World AIDS Day on Dec. 1.

High school and college students and well as Omaha citizens gathered at the Milo Bail Student Center to attend an awareness and education fair and observe presentations by UNO and OPS students.

UNO Student Health Services worked with the Douglas County Health Department to offer free HIV/AIDS and STD testing, which was followed by a panel discussion that featured a group of HIV/AIDS patients from the University of Nebraska Medical Center. The Nebraska AIDS Project then fronted a 5 p.m. candlelight vigil on the south side of Dodge Street to honor the memory of those who have died from AIDS, followed by a prayer group for healing at St. Martin of Tours Episcopal Church at 6 p.m.

"I think that what made UNO's event different than other years' [events] is that other years, individual sororities or fraternities or groups did events, and [this event] was a community event, it wasn't a UNO event, it was an Omaha event," said Marcia Adler, director of Student Health Services. "Every year we do a World AIDS Day event and we usually do HIV testing and STD testing, but it's usually just more within UNO, so [this event] was bigger than that."

UNO junior Ramey McNamara was one of the students who planned the event through the UNO Service Learning Academy. The idea for the event was born when her friend and fellow UNO student, Andrea Hansen, contacted her a year ago from Stellenbosch University in Cape Town, South Africa. Hansen has been volunteering at an HIV/AIDS youth



Junior Nathan Schmidt joined supporters along Dodge Street during the World AIDS Day candlelight vigil on Tuesday. (JOE THIEM/THE GATEWAY)

clinic there.

"They have children from 2 months to 16, 17 years [old] who are infected with HIV or AIDS," McNamara said. "The UNO Service Learning Academy and OPS magnet schools have always just really partnered together. We've gotten a really great response from the community and also from UNO and the OPS magnet schools, so we definitely hope to continue it."

The OPS students collected 28 boxes of school supplies to send to Hansen along with private grants and almost \$1,700 in UNICEF donations.

UNO students also got involved through class projects for a Clinical Psychology class

taught by associate professor Jessiline Anderson.

"We took it and just flew with it, it was incredible," she said. "I typically will have about four or five service learning projects in one course, and this one what we talked about was, 'Here's the topic, World AIDS Day. Here's what our community partners need. Now, how can we develop a project around that?' A lot of our students have...what my father used to call 'book-learn't' sense, in that have the theory and the scholarly stuff behind it. What they don't have is that personal touch, that making a difference kind of thing, and that's what service learning gives students and that's what they'll take away with them."

UNO senior Ben Schmoker, sophomore Michael Wheeldon and junior Sarah Johnson helped bring their project to virtual life by creating an abstract computer game for Anderson's project.

"When Dr. Anderson first proposed that we were going to do a service learning project for the class, I really like doing game design and feel it's a vocation for me and thought, 'Hey, I should make a game about AIDS,'" Schmoker said. "Obviously it's hyperbolic, but it's meant to represent that it's become more common over time, and it's something that's never mentioned in the game but if you play it enough times, I think the player would be able to pick up on it."

In the game, the player's avatar is a green Chevron arrow capped with a white sliver of immunity to help defend itself from HIV positive red arrows. Included in the game are condom shields to protect yourself from infection, antiviral medications to help slow symptoms once you become infected and educational statistics about AIDS.

The game levels are divided into decades, starting in the 1960s and moving through the next four decades with increasing percentages of becoming HIV positive.

"I like this project because of the artistic

SEE WORLD AIDS DAY: PAGE 2

Obama outlines buildup and exit strategy for Afghanistan

STEVEN THOMMA
MCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS (MCT)

WASHINGTON — Looking to end one of America's longest wars, President Barack Obama will send another 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan by next summer, but start to withdraw at least some American forces in July 2011.

The first Marines could arrive in Afghanistan by Christmas, the vanguard of an accelerated buildup that would see all of the extra troops there by next summer.

"I have determined that it is in our vital national interest to send an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan. After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home. These are the resources that we need to seize the initiative, while building the Afghan capacity that can allow for a responsible transition of our forces out of Afghanistan," Obama said Tuesday in a speech to cadets at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y.

"I do not make this decision lightly," Obama said, stressing that he recognizes how weary Americans are with war, and how

eager they are to focus most on rebuilding the battered U.S. economy.

"If I did not think that the security of the United States and the safety of the American people were at stake in Afghanistan," he said, "I would gladly order every single one of our troops home tomorrow."

New troops from the U.S. and its allies, Obama said, "will allow us to accelerate handing over responsibility to Afghan forces and allow us to begin the transfer of our forces out of Afghanistan in July of 2011."

"Just as we have done in Iraq, we will execute this transition responsibly, taking into account conditions on the ground. We will continue to advise and assist Afghanistan's security forces to ensure that they can succeed over the long haul. But it will be clear to the Afghan government - and, more importantly, to the Afghan people - that they will ultimately be responsible for their own country."

His promise of a surge of troops, coupled with a timetable for beginning a withdrawal, was a grand gamble aimed at navigating among the military's request for more troops, Islamic insurgents' belief

that they can outlast the U.S. and antiwar public opinion, especially among his fellow Democrats.

Obama's escalation strategy is aimed at stopping terrorists from retaking hold of Afghanistan - their base for planning the 2001 attacks against the U.S. - while also signaling to the Afghan government that it must stand up to defend its own country, and to war skeptics in the U.S. that the war, now in its ninth year, won't drag on indefinitely.

To skeptics at home, he insisted repeatedly that terrorists are gaining ground in Afghanistan and Pakistan and remain a grave threat to the U.S. He acknowledged the costs, saying that the escalation would cost at least \$30 billion this year alone, coming atop nearly \$1 trillion already spent in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

"We simply cannot afford to ignore the price of these wars," he said, though he didn't say how he'd pay the added costs beyond working with Congress to find a solution.

Moreover, he said, the costs are one reason why the U.S. can't afford an open-ended commitment to wage war in

Afghanistan, especially at a time when the U.S. is struggling to get back on its economic feet.

"That is why our troop commitment in Afghanistan cannot be open-ended," he said, "because the nation that I am most interested in building is our own."

Obama defended his three-month-long deliberation on Army Gen. Stanley McChrystal's plea for more troops and a new strategy, dismissing criticisms that he delayed needed reinforcements.

"There has never been an option before me that called for troop deployments before 2010, so there has been no delay or denial of resources necessary for the conduct of the war," he said.

While Obama stressed the timetable to start withdrawing troops - the message he wanted to send to Afghanistan and anti-war Americans - administration officials stressed that the scheduled only sets the start of the withdrawal of U.S. forces and leaves it open for Obama to determine later whether and how quickly to keep withdrawing those

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CRIME LOG

COMPILED BY EMILY JOHNSON
NEWS EDITOR

Wednesday, Nov. 18

2:00 a.m. While on patrol of University Drive South, Campus Security witnessed moving violations along University Drive South. Campus Security made contact with the driver just north of Lot J. Contact with the driver, a visitor, discovered a controlled substance violation. Omaha Police responded. The visitor was cited for possession of marijuana less than 1 ounce and possession of drug paraphernalia. OPD confiscated the marijuana and drug paraphernalia. The visitor departed campus.

Thursday, Nov. 19

9:30 a.m. A staff member reported the theft of university property from Arts and Sciences Hall. The theft was discovered on Tuesday, November 17, 2009 at 10 a.m.

Saturday, Nov. 21

12:22 a.m. Campus Security responded to a complaint of an alcohol violation at University Village. Investigation confirmed the alcohol violation. The alcohol was confiscated. One student was referred for disciplinary action.

Monday, Nov. 23

10:10 a.m. A visitor reported vandalism to their vehicle license plate while parked in Lot Q. The vandalism occurred on Friday, November 20, 2009 between 7:45 a.m. and 9:30 a.m.

1:05 p.m. A staff member reported the theft of personal property from the Milo Bail Student Center. The theft occurred between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m.

Tuesday, Nov. 24

1:15 a.m. While on patrol of University Drive West, Campus Security witnessed a moving violation along University Drive West. Campus Security made contact with the driver in Lot J. Contact with the driver, a visitor, discovered an alcohol violation. Omaha Police responded. Two visitors were cited for minor in possession of alcohol. One student was cited for MIP and referred for disciplinary action.

Friday, Nov. 27

10:14 p.m. Campus Security responded to a complaint of an alcohol violation at Maverick Village. Omaha Police responded. One student and six visitors were cited for minor in possession of alcohol. One visitor was cited for MIP, possession of drug equipment and prohibited acts. That visitor was banned and barred from campus. The student

was referred for disciplinary action.

Saturday, Nov. 28

1:53 a.m. While on patrol of Scott Village, Campus Security observed a student sitting outside with a beer can next to them. When questioned about the alcohol, the student used profanity and was uncooperative. Omaha Police responded. The student was arrested for disorderly conduct and minor in possession of alcohol. The student was referred for disciplinary action.

Sunday, Nov. 29

2:42 a.m. While on patrol of University Village, Campus Security discovered an alcohol and drug violation. One student was found unconscious. The student was revived and called his/her parents. The parents picked up the student and departed campus. The alcohol was disposed of and a marijuana pipe was confiscated. Five students were referred for disciplinary action.

3:36 a.m. While on patrol of University Drive South, Campus Security discovered an alcohol violation. The alcohol was confiscated. One student was referred for disciplinary action.

FROM **WORLD'S AIDS DAY: PAGE 1**

part, I liked the chance to do the drawings," Johnson said, citing her '60s protest picture as her favorite part.

"I've done a service learning project before, it was OK, I liked helping people, but this project seemed more like what [Sarah] said, more artistic and just more fun in general than the others," Wheeldon said.

Another group created three skits, an informational presentation and demonstration of appropriate condom use. The American Red Cross asked to use the project as part of their educational program, which was originally set up to be shown at Benson

High School.

"I have a lot of younger siblings, and I wanted to reach out to that particular age group of students," UNO senior Katie Oien said. "That's where it all starts is in high school, and I wanted to start out at the best possible time to prevent the contraction of AIDS. I wanted to beat the problem."

Both McNamara and Anderson were impressed by the amount of educational opportunities the day gave students.

"I feel like it's really important to be informed," McNamara said. "There's a lot of stereotypes with HIV and AIDS and coming here and seeing what these

people have to say and learning from the event is really good."

However, Anderson was concerned that students aren't having enough access to the correct knowledge they need. Some students, she said, said they thought virgins or monogamous people couldn't get HIV.

"Those are all myths that have to be dispelled," she said. I think the education piece that was done with how to put a condom on really hit home with a lot of students because they don't know the appropriate way to do it," she said. "What this tells me is that a lot of our students do not know as much as they thought they did about

HIV/AIDS. I think that this event will be a catalyst for students in particular, one to educate themselves about HIV/AIDS, not only in Africa but right here at home. Because what's happens is that we put a face on it and call it South Africa, this is what's going on

there. If it's not right in our face, we tend to not look at it."

Adler also agreed that more information needs to be constantly accessible to students, and pointed to the Douglas County Health Department's STD testing on the road at haunted houses and public places as a step in the right direction. She said students who had frequently visited Student Health Services were tested HIV positive by the health department last year.

"I think one of the things that happens is that people arrive at college and the whole world thinks they have all this information when they really don't have [it]," she said. "At college we have the freedom to answer questions and be pretty direct, but prior to college students don't always have access to that good information that's easy accessible. My hope is that by doing events and exposing kids to events like that they will come to college better prepared to protect themselves from all kinds of things, not just sexually transmitted diseases, and just have a broader awareness of how the world works."



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New threat to Nebraska's trees expected within a few years

MITCHELL WARREN
ASSISTANT SECTION EDITOR

Positioned on what may soon be the new frontline in the war waged against the emerald ash borer beetle, Fontenelle Forest is bracing itself by maintaining native species and fending off existing diseases.

The emerald ash beetle is an Asian beetle that first surfaced in Michigan in 2002. Since then, the population has spread to neighboring states at an alarming rate, killing millions of ash trees and wreaking financial ruin on local communities. It is now poised to threaten 30 million trees in Nebraska.

The destruction of so many ash trees destroys property values, lowers a community's appeal and hurts nurseries by eliminating large amounts of stock. It also negatively impacts the carbon footprint and increases heating bill costs as valuable shade is lost.

"The emerald ash borer is on its way," said Gary Garabrandt, director of science and stewardship at Fontenelle Forest. "You never know, it could be a load of firewood away."

The emerald ash borer has been identified in states as close as Illinois, Missouri and Minnesota. Garabrandt expects to see the beetle within the next few years.

The infestation is now knocking on Nebraska's door.

"When the beetle will get here is kind of the million dollar question right now," said Eric Berg, Community Forestry Program Leader for the Nebraska Forestry Service. "The real question to ask is, 'When will we detect it?'"

Anybody who suspects that a

tree may be affected by the emerald ash borer should look for "D" shaped exit holes where the pest leaves the tree. These holes are smaller than those left by native species.

"Our ecosystem may become more fragmented," Garabrandt said. "We're worried about a loss in native diversity."

Kathleen Cue, an UNL extension office associate for Douglas County, said the beetles are a big problem in the United States because American ash trees didn't evolve with the pest.

"It's never been a problem in China," she said, "but native trees are succumbing like crazy."

Nebraska has no plan to lie down and wait for the impending ash extermination. Agencies from across the state teamed up to create the Nebraska Emerald Ash Borer Response Plan. This plan sets guidelines to help combat the beetles if they surface in the community.

The Nebraska Emerald Ash Borer Response Plan outlines the potential for an economic loss of \$137,403,770 in Lincoln alone, while placing a \$20 to \$60 billion price tag on the economic loss to the United States' urban forests if the beetle makes it to Nebraska. These numbers are a compilation of several factors including the removal and replacement of both private and public ash stocks.

Tactics to fight the spread of beetles include quarantines, restrictions on firewood transportation, use of approved insecticides and correct disposal of infected trees.

Berg sees injections as a good option for high value trees but worries about the cost.

"Injections are better on an

individual basis," he said. "They're not very feasible on a large scale right now."

The Fontenelle Nature Association views the emerald ash borer as what could be the latest in a slew of diseases and pests that have made their way into Nebraska.

Garabrandt said the association actively addresses issues with diseases and pests found in plants throughout the forest. Common problems include Dutch elm disease, various fungal infections and the introduction of foreign species.

Dutch elm disease, a fungal affliction that affects many elms across Nebraska and the U.S. cuts off waterways within trees. Usually, an affected tree only survives for a few years depending on its initial health and age.

"The plumping in the trees gets plugged up," Garabrandt said.

Cue gave a similar description.

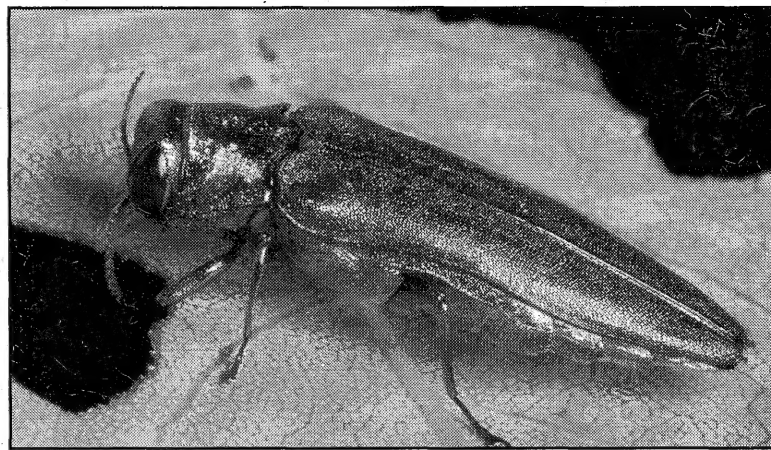
"Once the beetle gets in there, the straw is broken," she said. "There has been a massive dieback within the population."

The U.S. has had a hard time sustaining the elm population as trees that have stood for hundreds of years are dying frequently.

"There are thousands of trees in Nebraska without a future," Garabrandt said. "It's not that we don't have elms anymore, it's just they don't live very long."

The staff and volunteers at Fontenelle have been proactively addressing Dutch elm disease through a project funded by the Nebraska Environmental Trust and the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum. Through the project, the association purchased 75 disease-resistant American elms.

After distributing the saplings



Emerald ash borer. (PHOTO COURTESY DAVID CAPPAERT/FORESTRYIMAGES.ORG)

across the forest to discourage cross-pollination, the association waited a couple years to collect seeds and plant new specimens. Only time will tell if the project is successful.

The current diseases and pests rack up a substantial bill for the association, even without the imminent influx of emerald ash borers. Garabrandt estimates the association requests grants of around \$3,000 whenever it plants new trees.

Mulhall's Nursery in Omaha will also feel the full weight of the emerald ash borer if it makes an appearance in Nebraska. The beetles have damaged trees and sales at nurseries located in affected areas.

Although Mulhall's has not started taking noticeable preventative measures, Rachael Doolen, director of employee development, said the nursery is doing everything they can to be prepared.

"We're still selling ash trees," she said, confident that when the beetles arrive there will be a plan in place.

Infestations and disease are nothing new to the Mulhall's team. The staff already addresses

issues related to Dutch elm and other diseases. Mulhall's Web site offers several documents that detail information specific to different types of trees.

"Our stock is checked before we can sell and bad trees are removed," Doolen said. "We don't sell diseased trees."

Cue, Garabrandt and Berg all stressed the importance of tree diversity in Nebraska's communities. Overplanting species exacerbates problems with diseases and pests. Less variety means a more vulnerable ecosystem. Cue estimates a species is overplanted if it constitutes 10 to 17 percent of the population.

Berg said he hopes the additional diversity will prepare Nebraska for any future problems, like the emerald ash borer.

"Right now, we're trying to ramp up our tree planting grants and increase diversity," he said.

While the emerald ash borer has yet to surface in Nebraska, residents are requested to keep their guard up against the impending pest.

"Remain vigilant," Cue said, "trust me; you will know when it is here."

FROM **AFGHANISTAN**: PAGE 1

troops and how long to take.

He ordered the extra troops into Afghanistan by next summer, accelerating a plan that initially had called for the deployment to be phased in from March through the rest of the year.

The rapid dispatch of extra troops would bring the U.S. total there to 98,000, and if the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq proceeds on schedule, for the first time there would be more American troops in Afghanistan than in Iraq. A hoped-for addition of 5,000 to 10,000 more troops from NATO and other countries would boost their numbers to between 44,000 and 49,000.

Most of the surge forces will travel to southern Afghanistan, often to places where there have been few or no coalition forces. That will require setting up housing, sanitation and security structures for those forces. In addition, the military will have to get enough vehicles into Afghanistan for those forces.

The extra troops will help fight the Taliban, secure key towns and cities, and train Afghan forces. The plan calls for boosting the Afghan army from 95,000 now to 134,000 by October 2010. That stops short of a more ambitious goal of boosting the Afghan army to 240,000 and the police from 92,000 to 160,000 by 2013.

Beyond the military challenges, Obama also faced a Herculean political challenge selling an escalation to a war-weary country, to liberals who want to get out altogether, to fiscal conservatives and others who worry about the cost of the escalation, and to conservatives who want to get more troops in faster.

Recent Gallup polls found two-thirds

of Americans believe things are going badly there, the worst verdict in the eight years of the war.

The public is divided over sending more U.S. troops. Gallup found 47 percent support sending more troops, up 5 percentage points in two weeks, but still short of a majority. At the same time, 39 percent want to start withdrawing troops, down 5 points in two weeks.

Liberals complained that Obama's war will divert resources from priorities at home.

"Perhaps nation-building should begin at home," said Rep. Dennis Kucinich, D-Ohio. "An escalation of the war in Afghanistan at a time of such economic dislocation and hardship raises questions about America's priorities and whether or not we are losing our way as we attempt to stride aside the globe as some Colossus."

At the same time, some conservatives lambasted Obama for taking more than three months to announce his decision and then for setting a timetable to start withdrawing troops.

"It worries me that the president's commitment to our mission does not match that of our troops on the ground," said Rep. Tom Price, R-Ga., the chairman of the Republican Study Committee.

"It is troubling that the president rejected Gen. McChrystal's full request for resources. Even more concerning, the president managed to declare the beginning and the end of a military operation at the same time. This type of conflicting message does not offer confidence to our allies, gives our friends and enemies' reason to doubt the president's resolve and is simply counterproductive."

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UNO hosts holiday party for recent graduates

RACHEL GEORGE
CONTRIBUTOR

As the semester winds down, one of UNO's newest organizations aims to bring recent graduates and their families together this season.

The UNO Young Alumni Association will present its second annual family holiday party Dec. 11 at the Henry Doorly Zoo. The event will kick off at 6 p.m. with dinner catered by Valentino's at the TreeTops restaurant and provide an assortment of activities throughout the night ranging from photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus to children's arts and crafts.

The Young Alumni Association arranges several events throughout the year with the ultimate goal of bringing new graduates and their families closer together while networking in the Omaha community. The group was formed in 2007 for graduates under the age of 40.

An estimated 45 percent of UNO's 80,000 living graduates are age 40 or younger, according to the organization's Web site. That also includes almost a third of all graduates who are in their 30s.

The family holiday party is one event that the association hosts. It is open to anyone who wants to purchase a ticket.

"You don't have to be an alumnus and you don't have to be young," said Ryan Nelson, chairman for the Young Alumni Association. "Have a drink, have some food, get out and socialize."

Last year, the organization's holiday party was so well received that they decided to bring it back this year, said Elizabeth Kraemer, coordinator of the Alumni Programs for the UNO Alumni Association.

"It was a huge success," Kraemer said. "We had maybe a little under 200 people last year."

For the group, having the party this year at the Henry Doorly Zoo will provide the ideal setting for this family event.

"We wanted to have a lot of different things that appealed to all kinds of people, specifically families," Kraemer said.

The Young Alumni Association expects a similar turnout this year, but hopes that more people hear about this event and decide to attend.

"We sent invites to everyone who came last year," Nelson said. "Lots of people last year really wanted to go, but couldn't quite make it so we're hoping they can this year."

For more information about this event or about the Young Alumni Association, visit unoalumni.org or contact Elizabeth Kraemer at 554-4802.

Touring Smithsonian photo exhibit makes stop at UNO

HOLLY FREDRICKSON
STAFF WRITER

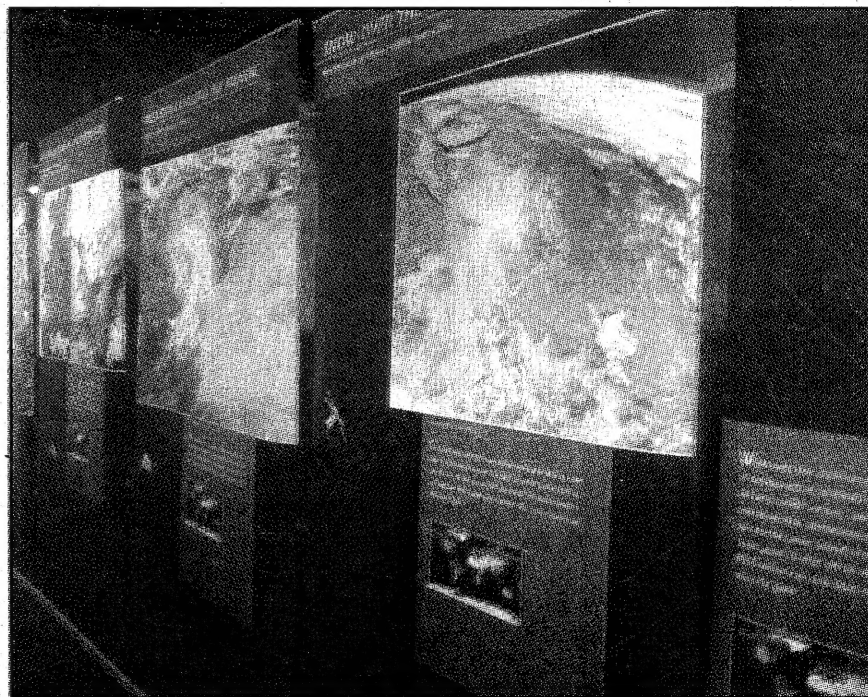
The Smithsonian Institute collaborated with the Center for Earth and Planetary Studies and the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum to bring its traveling "Earth from Space" exhibit to UNO.

The exhibit features an impressive collection of large, high-resolution photos of the planet Earth as seen from orbiting satellites. However, taking pictures isn't typically the primary goal of these satellites. These satellites are mostly focused on collecting data whether it's ocean temperatures, cloud cover or ozone condition. Public fascination with these bird's eye views has prompted many institutions like the Smithsonian to make exhibits out of their own collection of images.

The "Earth from Space" exhibit currently housed at the Dr. CC and Mabel L. Criss Library contains over 40 images, each unique in its level of detail such as the famous "Earth at Night" picture, which shows the surface of the planet by nightfall. "Earth at Night" was shot from 1994 to 1995 and gives an idea of the approximate spread of urban development across the planet with thicker concentrations of light representing larger cities.

"It's been pretty popular so far," said Linda Riviera, a staff secretary for the Criss Library. "I think the students really enjoy it."

Getting the celebrated traveling exhibit to stop at UNO involved a lot of effort on the part of the staff at the Criss Library, Riviera said. They had to go through a "rigorous" application



The "Earth from Space" exhibit is currently on display at the Criss Library until Dec. 17. Shown here are aerial views of the earth. (CHRISTA HILLMER/THE GATEWAY)

process for the exhibit.

"They wanted to be sure that we have enough security to protect the exhibit," Riviera said.

The library had to pay for the exhibit, but Riviera said that a portion of the library's budget is set aside for bringing exhibits to campus so students can enjoy them for free.

One of the main draws of satellite photography is that it gives viewers a unique perspective of the world. In photos like "Ocean of Sand," viewers can see an aerial view of a coastal area, where the ripples of beach and sandbars form a pattern.

There are plenty of cityscapes in the "Earth from Space" exhibit,

too. Chicago, New York City, San Francisco, New Orleans and even the famous pyramids of Egypt are present. The natural world is given as much attention as the urban centers of Earth in this exhibit. Another more sobering series of photos shows a before-and-after shot of a region of the Amazon rainforest.

"We're pleased to be able to bring this Smithsonian exhibit and other national touring exhibitions to the UNO and Omaha community," said Audrey DeFrank, acting dean of Criss Library.

The "Earth from Space" exhibit will be on display at the UNO Criss Library through Dec. 17.

Films Streams brings back youthful classics

BENJAMIN MCCALL
CONTRIBUTOR

With the end of the year drawing to a close, a local theater wraps up a film series aimed at bridging the gap between the young and those young at heart.

Ruth Sokolof's Film Streams, located at 1340 Webster St. in downtown Omaha, kicked off the Forever Young series on July 4 and has since shown classic films such as "The Wizard of Oz," "Annie" and "The Black Stallion." The series includes movies that span more than a half century and the theater's aspiration is "for young audiences to experience classics on the big screen and for older kids like parents, siblings, grandparents and everyone in between to reconnect with some of the most artistic and imaginative children's movies ever made," according to the Web site.

Casey Logan, communication coordinator for Film Streams, said that they ran a shorter film series last year, which consisted of Muppet movies. This year, with a grant from Lincoln Financial Group, Film Streams expanded the series into the Forever Young films that offer viewers more movie variety.

"It's been interesting with this series," Logan said. "Since we opened, we have been hearing from a lot of people that they wanted to come to the theater, but had young children. It is one thing we have wanted to do is make a showing for family and kids. These are a lot of films parents enjoyed as children. Now they can relive the movies and introduce them to their children."

Film Streams had many film options to choose from, Logan said. The organization decided to show movies such as Dr. Seuss' "The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T" and "The New Adventures of Pippi Longstocking" during the holiday season so they could show "The Muppet Christmas Carol" the week of Christmas.

"This year started with 'The Wizard of Oz,' which has been a very successful," Logan said. "One thing that is kind of exciting is that we are showing, stop-motion, live-action and animation [movies]. A lot of these shows were made when films didn't rely on computers so it has a different look and feel than newer movies."

Some films in the series, however, have been more popular than others. "The Wizard of Oz" has been the most successful so far, Logan said.

"We have been hoping more will

come out during the holiday during 'The Muppets Christmas Carol' when kids are out from school," Logan said.

Junior Kari Sawyer said she remembers watching "The Muppets" growing up and that Film Streams may be onto something with their series.

"Film Streams has a great idea," Sawyer said. "'The Muppets' were great. I would definitely see the movie over the break. I have never been to Film Streams before, but I would definitely go now."

With the success they've experienced, Logan said he sees a future with the series and looks forward to it becoming a staple at the theater.

"We are hoping to continue the Forever Young series next year," Logan said. "We are hoping it will draw people to Film Streams so we can give it a home here."

The Forever Young series only runs Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Admission is \$8 for adults, \$6 for students and seniors and \$4 for Film Streams members. To purchase tickets, view a listing of movies currently playing or for more information about the Forever Young film series, visit filmstreams.org or call 933-0259.

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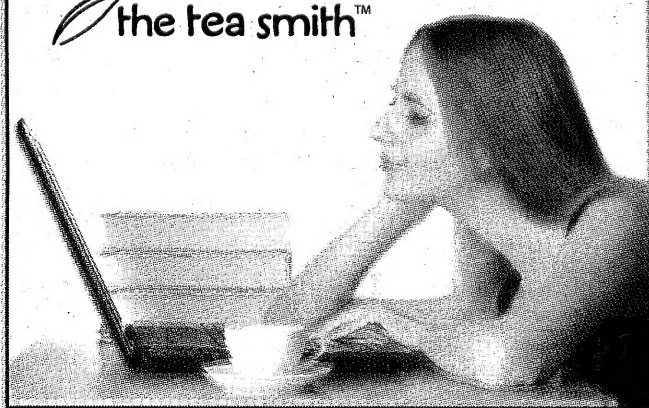
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DECEMBER EVENTS CALENDAR

ANDREA BARBE
ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

21-and-over show starts at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$29.

Dec. 4 – The Omaha Theater Ballet's "The Imperial Nutcracker" plays at the Orpheum Theater. The ballet begins at 7:30 p.m. Performances run through Dec. 6. Tickets are \$19 for theater members and \$24 for non-members.

Dec. 4 – Durham Museum presents the Ethnic Holiday Festival from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. This event features different cultures and how they celebrate this time of year. The festival includes food, handmade crafts and entertainers performing traditional dances to music.

Dec. 4 – The Beatles tribute show "Yesterday and Today" opens at the Omaha Community Playhouse's Howard Drew Theatre.

Dec. 5 – Lauritzen Gardens presents "Holiday Happenings" from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. This event features a poinsettia show in the floral display hall, live holiday music, holiday food, crafts and pictures with Santa Claus.

Dec. 5 – "A Christmas Carol" returns to the Omaha Community Playhouse. The classic play starts at 7:30 p.m. with shows through Dec. 23. For tickets, call 553-0080.

Dec. 5 – UNO wraps up its final performance of "The Miracle Worker." The play starts at 7:30 p.m. at the Weber Fine Arts Building. Tickets are free to UNO students with the MavCard.

Dec. 6 – Slowdown hosts an all-acoustic show with Dashboard Confessional and New Found Glory. Tickets are \$25.

Dec. 6 – The Food Network's Guy Fieri stirs up some food and entertainment at Harrah's Stir Concert Cove. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. while the

Dec. 8 – Metalcore band Underoath performs at Sokol Auditorium. Doors open at 6 p.m. with the show beginning at 7 p.m. Tickets can be purchased at onepercentproductions.com or at any Homer's location.

Dec. 8 – UNO's percussion ensemble plays at 7:30 p.m. Tomm Roland directs the concert held at the Strauss Performing Arts Center Recital Hall.

Dec. 9 – Comedian Bo Burnham performs at the Omaha Music Hall for a 7:30 p.m. show. This event is presented by Maverick Productions.

Dec. 9 – The Waiting Room Lounge hosts alternative rock and hip hop group Flobots. The concert kicks off at 9 p.m. Tickets are \$15.

Dec. 9 – Bestselling author and Wall Street Journal columnist Jeffrey Zaslow comes to the Jewish Community Center at 8 p.m. for a free lecture and book signing.

Dec. 10 – The UNO Chamber Choir and Chamber Orchestra perform a concert featuring Mozart's "Coronation Mass" at the Strauss Recital Hall. The concert begins at 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 11 – UNO's Art Gallery wraps up its Fall 2009 BFA Thesis Exhibition. Admission is free.

Dec. 11 – The Mid-America Center Arena presents classic rock band KISS for a 7:30 p.m. concert.

Dec. 11 – Bemis Underground showcases "Reflections [of you, me and everyone we don't know]" an exhibit by local artists. The gallery



Australian rockers Sick Puppies perform at Sokol Auditorium on Dec. 12. (COURTESY MYSPACE.COM/SICKPUPPIES)

opens at 6 p.m.

Dec. 12 – 89.7 The River hosts Holiday Havoc with Australian alternative rock band Sick Puppies at Sokol Auditorium. This all-ages show begins at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$18 in advance or \$20 day of show.

Dec. 12 – The Dundee Theatre in midtown shows "Scrooged" starring Bill Murray for the midnight movie.

Dec. 13 – Local band Cursive performs with Capgun Coup, Brad Hoshaw and Vago at the Waiting Room. The concert kicks off at 9 p.m. Tickets are \$14.

Dec. 13 – UNO hosts the Heartland Philharmonic for a "Winter Dreams" concert featuring Tchaikovsky's "Symphony No. 1" and Beethoven's "Piano Concerto No. 1." For more information, call 554-2177.

Dec. 17 – The Waiting Room presents "Yo Yo Yo! A Very Gunky XMAS." The dance party begins at 9 p.m. Admission is \$5.

Dec. 18 – Bluebarn Theatre hosts a special performance of "Silent Night of the Lambs" at 10 p.m. Tickets are \$25 for adults and \$20 for students. Call 345-1576 to reserve tickets.

Dec. 18 – The Omaha Symphony presents "Christmas with the Symphony" at the Holland Performing Arts Center's Kiewit Concert Hall.

Dec. 22 – Mannheim Steamroller plays at the Orpheum Theater for two nights. Both

concerts start at 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 23 – Funny Bone Comedy Club presents Craig Peters for a 7:30 p.m. show.

Dec. 24 – "The Muppet Christmas Carol" plays at Film Streams as the final movie in their Forever Young cinema series that runs through Dec. 31.

Dec. 25 – Local cover band Lemon Fresh Day plays at Murphy's Lounge. The music kicks off at 9 p.m.

Dec. 25 – Film Streams presents Christmas classic "It's a Wonderful Life." The movie runs through Dec. 31.

Dec. 27 – Buck Bowen and Surreal the MC host a tribute concert to popular 1990s hip-hop group Cypress Hill. This 21-and-over show starts at 9 p.m. and costs \$2 at the door.

Dec. 31 – Sokol Auditorium presents New Year's Rock'N' Eve Party with Conspiracy Theory and DJ Kevin Kracher. Doors open at 7 p.m. For tickets, email nyeeparty_tickets@yahoo.com or call 553-3700.

Dec. 31 – Slowdown hosts Happy GOO Year 2010. The 21-and-over party kicks off at 9 p.m. Tickets are \$15 in advance or \$20 day of show.

Dec. 31 – First National Bank presents a firework show at the Gene Leahy Mall, 14th and Farnam Streets. This event is free and open to the public. Festivities kick off at 7 p.m.



First National Bank's firework display at the Gene Leahy Mall. (MICHELLE BISHOP/THE GATEWAY)

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Volleyball's Thommes a second team All-American

ZACH SEASTEDT
SPORTS EDITOR

After helping lead the UNO women's volleyball team to the NCAA Division II playoffs, senior middle blocker Ellen Thommes has received many postseason honors for her individual performance throughout the season.

First, Thommes was honored as a member of the Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association's first team. She was then named to the Daktronics all-region second team and then chosen the American Volleyball Coaches Association first team all-region.

On Monday, the AVCA named Thommes as a member of its All-America second team.

"It's such a big honor," Thommes said. "I don't know who wouldn't be proud to be recognized like that. I'm just grateful, there are a lot of good players. It means a lot, you can't help but be happy about it."

The Omaha Marian graduate earned the honor after leading the team with 3.16 kills per set, 1.02 blocks, 3.97 points and a .388 hitting percentage. Thommes finished second in the MIAA in blocks and fourth in points.

Her hitting percentage was second in the MIAA and 13th in the nation. That is the third highest single-season attack percentage in UNO history. Her .342 career attack percentage is also third best.

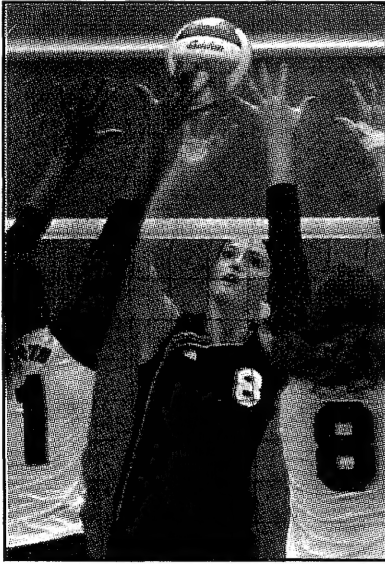
"My main goals for myself this season were to lead the team in kills, blocks and to have the best hitting percentage," she said. "I expect a lot of myself."

Thommes' final season playing for UNO came to an early end when the Mavs lost in the first round of the NCAA Division II tournament to conference foe and eighth-ranked Washburn 3-1 on Nov. 19. The loss was disappointing for Thommes.

"At the end of the season, we fell short of the goals we wanted to achieve," Thommes said. "I know our main goal was to make it to the Elite

Eight, but we lost in the first round. It leaves a sour taste in everyone's mouths because we had started so well."

Thommes had been playing superbly until a knee injury occurred on Nov. 4 in the victory against Northwest Missouri State.



Senior middle blocker Ellen Thommes was named a second team All-American by the American Volleyball Coaches Association. (MICHELLE BISHOP/THE GATEWAY)

"In the last five points of the Northwest Missouri game, my knee bent or hyperextended the wrong way," Thommes said. "It was the first major injury of my life. I've never been through treatment through my whole career and for it to happen with just a couple of weeks left, it was kind of funny I think. I wasn't out for long, after the swelling went down it started to heal pretty quickly."

Thommes said she could feel a change in her athletic abilities after the injury, despite putting up similar offensive numbers on the stat sheets.

"I know that first game I played after it happened, against Truman, I noticed my quickness wasn't as fast," she said. "I would try to go quick or fast and I was a second slower. After that game, we were really pushing the treatment, so it really did heal pretty quick."

With her collegiate career at an end, Thommes said she hasn't spent much time dwelling on her final season as a Maverick volleyball player.

"I try not to think about it," she said. "I tend to be a very emotional person, so I try not to think about that. Now that it's over, it's hard not because you are done playing volleyball but because you grow so close to your teammates. To not be a part of that anymore, it's sad."

While Thommes is ready to take some time away from the volleyball court, she has not ruled out a possible return to the sport later in life.

"I think as far as competitive volleyball, this is it," Thommes said. "I'll probably take a break from any volleyball for a while. Maybe I'll get into coaching someday. It'd probably be a while. It's a possibility."

Mavs open conference play with 80-72 victory over Washburn

ZACH SEASTEDT
SPORTS EDITOR

After a 5-0 start to the season, the Mavs looked prepared for the upcoming conference schedule Wednesday night. Junior guard Tyler Bullock scored 19 points and senior forward Matt Newman added 10 points off the bench to help lead the Mavs to a 80-72 win over the Washburn Ichabods in Sapp Fieldhouse.

UNO hit 16 of its final 18 free throws in the second half to keep the game out of reach for Washburn.

The Mavs improved to 6-0 overall and 1-0 in the Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association with the win. Washburn falls to 5-1 and 0-1 in the conference.

Bullock's 19 points led four Mavs with double figures. Senior guard Andrew Bridger scored 18 points while senior forward Dion Curry had 12.

"I liked our balance on the offensive end," head coach Derrin Hansen said.

The Mavs overcame a scrappy first half which had Washburn carve up the Mavericks' defense with cutters and a strong inside presence.

"We have to play smarter," Hansen said. "We let them in the paint way too many times in the first half. They got some offensive rebounds and a lot of backside rebounds. Our guards have to do a better job of rebounding."

UNO gained control of the game in the second half when they concentrated on

plugging up the lane. The interior defense stiffened, forcing the Ichabods to take tough shots.

"We backed off of them a little bit, made them make contested jumpers instead of letting them drive by us and make plays in the middle of the paint or getting it to other guys for standup shots," Hansen said. "I thought we were a little more, I hate to say it, passive but we were a little overly aggressive."

Hansen said the defense calmed down as the game went on.

"I want to say we just played smarter in the second half," he said. "God bless our kids, we were all fired up for our first conference game at home so they might have been a little overly aggressive, and Washburn took advantage of that aggressiveness. Second half, I thought we calmed down and played better."

The game got off to a slow start with the Mavs holding a 8-5 lead with more than six minutes elapsed. The lead changed back and forth before Bridger's 3-pointer tied the game at 17 with nine minutes to play in the half.

The Mavs opened up a 34-29 lead with two minutes remaining in the half, but a quick 3-pointer and a jumper by Washburn tied the game at 34. A free throw by Bullock gave UNO the 35-34 advantage at halftime.

UNO and Washburn exchanged leads three times in the first five minutes of the second half. The Mavs took the lead for good

SEE MEN'S BASKETBALL: PAGE 7

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FROM **MEN'S BASKETBALL**: PAGE 6

on a layup by junior guard Torrian Harris. Harris finished with four points and three rebounds in 13 minutes of action.

The Mavs built an 11-point lead with a 62-51 score, but the Ichabods got to within five with less than two minutes in the game. The biggest shot of the game was made with 1:38 remaining as Newman hit a jumpshot with the shot clock running down to push the lead from five to seven. Bridger earned his most difficult assist of the night on the play, passing to Newman as he was falling backward into an opponent.

"Newman made the big one at the end of the shot clock," Hansen said. "It went from a two possession to a three possession game, so that was a big, big shot by Matt and one we needed. He's a senior, he's been around, he rose up like he's done before. I thought him, Dion and Bridger were really good for us in the stretch."

The Mavs made 64.7 percent of their shots in the second half, making 11-of-17 shots. UNO shot 51.1 percent for the game.

Both teams had turnover issues. Washburn had 20 while UNO committed 19.

"We got to cut down on the 19 turnovers," Hansen said. "Say we have nine or 10 turnovers, that's nine possessions that we didn't get. That's something we have to do better at. That's something we have to clean up."

Washburn's leading scorers are their big men, 6-foot-9 forward Logan Stutz and 6-foot-5 forward DeAndre Washington. The size

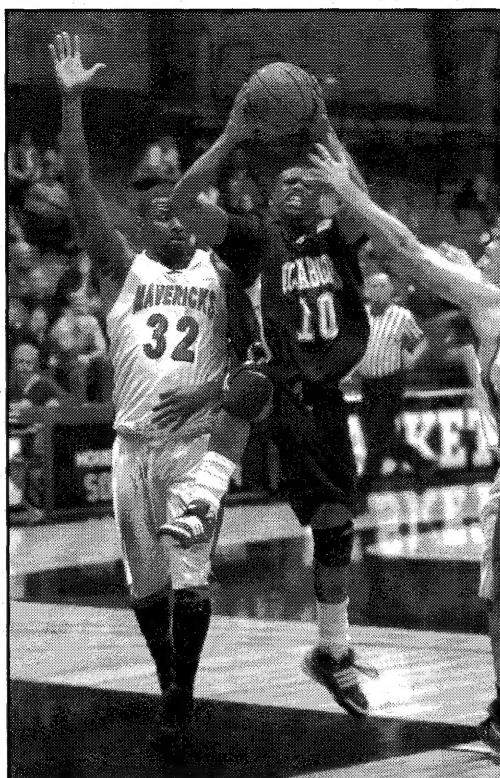
match up could have caused UNO some issues, but the defense kept their offensive stars in check for most of the game. The Mavs held Stutz to eight points while Washington scored 15.

"I thought our bigs did a good job on Stutz and Washington," Hansen said. "They had some big numbers coming in. I was really happy with that."

Bullock has led the Mavs in scoring in five of their first six games, including leading the team in free throw attempts and free throw makes. Hansen talked about Bullock's scoring ability and how it helps his team.

"When you get 19 points on six shots, you had an efficient night," Hansen said. "The thing I like about Tyler is that he picks his shots. He knows when he can, he knows when he can't, he knows when to give it up, he knows when to make that extra burst and also find guys. He picks his spots, doesn't really shoot a bad one. Sometimes you want him to be a little more aggressive. He can get his own shot and he can set up teammates, that's what's made it hard to guard him this year."

Bullock leads a list of Maverick newcomers who have begun to form an identity with the team. Junior college transfers Bain, Harris and junior guard Jamel LeBranch have provided the team with many valuable assets, even if they are new



UNO's Dion Curry tries to defend Washburn's William McNeill as he heads to the hoop during Wednesday's game. (MICHELLE BISHOP/THE GATEWAY)

to the Division II game.

"A lot of times it takes a semester to get going, to understand how you're playing, the speed of the game and different systems," Hansen said. "Those guys for the most part have caught on really well. Second semester when we come back, you'll see the light bulb click a little bit because then everything that we do is repetitive. Everything we're doing right now for them is new. It takes a little while to get going, but we're really happy with those guys right now, big part of what we're doing."

The Mavs return to the court on Dec. 5 when they take on Fort Hays State at Sapp Fieldhouse at 6 p.m.

Poor shooting downs Mavs against No. 15 Washburn 68-47

ZACH SEASTEDT
SPORTS EDITOR

The UNO women's basketball team shot 29 percent for the game as No. 15 Washburn topped the Mavs 68-47 Wednesday night at Sapp Fieldhouse.

The Mavs fell to 3-3 on the season and 0-1 in the Mid-American Intercollegiate Athletics Association in the first game of conference action.

Poor shooting plagued UNO throughout the game. The Mavs finished 19-of-65 from the field, a 29.2 field goal percentage, and 0-for-12 from 3-point range.

Senior guard Alyssa Green led the Mavs with 10 points on 4-of-10 shooting from the field.

Both teams got off to slow starts in the opening minutes of the game, with Washburn holding a 7-6 lead five minutes into the game. The Lady Blues were up 19-12 when they went on a 13-to-2 scoring run to go up 32-14 with 4:51 remaining in the half.

The Mavs went into halftime down 39-20 when freshman guard Jamie Nash's shot attempt in the closing seconds was blocked. Nash finished the game with eight points.

Washburn kept its foot on the pedal throughout the second half. The half kicked off with a 3-pointer by guard Hope Gregory and a jumper by guard Rose Hammond to push the Lady Blues ahead 44-22.

Washburn got its largest lead

of the game when guard Brette Ulsaker put the Lady Blues ahead 54-25 with a layup with 9:26 in the game.

The Mavs used a 8-0 in the latter portions of the game to cut the deficit to 19. Two free throws by Nash in the final minute of the game capped the scoring 68-47.

Freshman guard Paige Frauendorfer scored eight points on 4-of-12 shooting. Sophomore forward Heather Pohl led the Mavs with seven rebounds and scored two points.

Senior forward Ashley Nelson, named the MIAA's athlete of the week on Monday, had a rough afternoon shooting. She was 1-of-10 from the field and finished with three points. She added five rebounds and two blocks.

Senior guard Lady Sanders had three steals for UNO, which tied Washburn with seven for the game. The Mavs reached double figures in steals in four of the first six games and averaged 15.2 a game heading into the contest against Washburn. UNO had three more turnovers than Washburn, 18 to 15.

Nash had three assists for the Mavs. The team had 10 for the game while Washburn had 21.

Washburn edged the Mavs in rebounds, 52 to 41. The Lady Blues also connected on nine of their 24 3-point attempts.

The Mavs are in the middle of a five-game home stretch. The loss snaps a two-game home winning streak. UNO will return to action on Dec. 5 when they take on Fort Hays State beginning at 4 p.m.

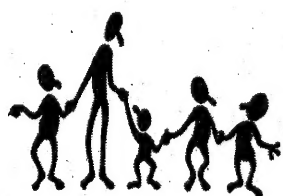
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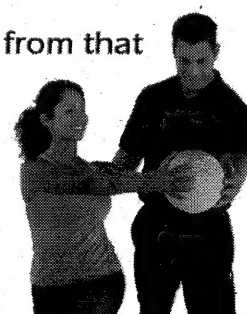
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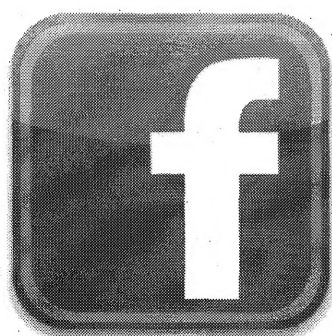
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Confessions of a Minivan

Well, it's another day in the parking lot here at Wal-mart. A lot has happened since we talked before. You're gonna love this. You remember Mike, the annoying SUV with the narcissistic streak? Well, he went and did something else none of us here could do. He qualified for the cash for clunkers program.

When I found out he got traded in, I laughed so hard I actually backfired. It was priceless, really. I actually laughed until wiper fluid started leaking from my wiper spigots. His person traded him in for one of those little bitty Ford Focus things.

Sadly, we lost Wayne a few months ago. His person never was a careful driver and he had the dings and dents to prove it. Unfortunately back in September, his person decided to drive fast in an area where deer cross the roads. A large buck just appeared on the road before Wayne could stop and it pushed his engine back a couple feet. He went to the compacter a week later. We really miss him and his bizarre sense of humor.

"Hey, Floyd! Are you tellin' them about Wayne?" Sylvia asks from her parking space.

"Yeah," I reply sadly. "Bad day that. I really

get nervous now when I see deer crossing signs."

"Oh, me too!" Sylvia exclaims emphatically. "I can't imagine how much damage it would do if I hit one."

Wayne and Mike aren't the only ones from our group to leave us. Cherry, the Chevy Corsica Mike used to like, got traded in last summer for a new car. Now her person is driving Dusty, a 96 Geo Prism that used to be driven by some lady that works here too.

The new car in our group is Belle, a 2008 Chevy Cobalt and her person is Dusty's former person. I think those two must live together because Belle tells me sometimes Dusty's person drives her. I haven't really got it all figured out yet cause people tend to confuse me sometimes.

We found out later that a couple of college girls bought Cherry and fixed up all the little problems she was having so it's not really like we lost her so much as she went on to a new job.

"You gonna tell 'em about your transmission problem?" Sylvia asks.

Oh great, why did she have to bring up that one? I wasn't going to mention this cause it's kinda embarrassing. I guess I brought this on myself by mentioning Sylvia's transmission problems last

time. Oh well, I guess it'll help if I just get it off my hood.

You remember last time we talked I mentioned minivans have a problem with their transmissions? Well about six months ago mine went out right in the middle of rush hour traffic. It was horrible! There I was, stuck in the middle of the road, unable to move forward or backward. There were all these other angry cars around me honking their horns and their people waving their fists at me. It was humiliating.

Then there was the tow truck. He was all P-O'd because he had to block traffic to pick me up and then the tow was covered by AAA so he couldn't stick us with a big cash bill. You can never tell about tow trucks. Some of them are pretty cool, others can be real jerks. Like you're inconveniencing them when they have to come get you. The one I got turned out to be some old curmudgeon with an attitude.

Anyway, fixing my transmission set my person back a pretty good chunk of change but at least I'm running again. She also did a complete detailing on me so I don't have food crumbs lodged in my seats and carpet anymore. You have no idea how annoying that feels. Cookie crumbs itch when they're lodged in the upholstery.

Once she got the interior cleaned up I felt so much better and my seats didn't smell like sour milk anymore. After putting in all that work, my person isn't letting her little ones

eat or drink in the car anymore. I can't tell you how relieved I am. Man it feels good to be clean again. I almost feel like a brand new van!

"You're lookin' pretty sharp there, too," Sylvia says from her spot. "Is that a double coat of wax?"

"Sure is," I tell her. "It's the good stuff too. I don't know what got into her but I'm likin' it."

Speaking of sharp finishes, here comes Edgar. You remember him; he's the '57 Chevy pickup that was in the process of being restored. Well he just got a brand new paint job and it looks damn good on him. It's a real nice hunter green with a bit of metal flake in the paint that sparkles when the light hits just right.

"Hey there younguns," he calls out as he parks. "How's everyone today?"

"Couldn't be better, Ed," Sylvia replies.

"Same here," I add. "I can't complain."

From a few rows over, Seymour, a distant cousin of mine, calls out a hello to Edgar. "Lookin' good old timer," he says good naturedly. "Love the paint job." Seymour is a Chrysler Sebring built in '07 and he's something of a character. He used to work for Enterprise Rent-A-Car before he was rescued by his current person. He can really tell some horror stories about abusive drivers.

"You got that right cuz," he adds. "I once had this little old lady who would drive five miles an hour under the limit in her own car. The minute she rented me, she was doing donuts in the parking lot and driving like she was in the Indy 500!"

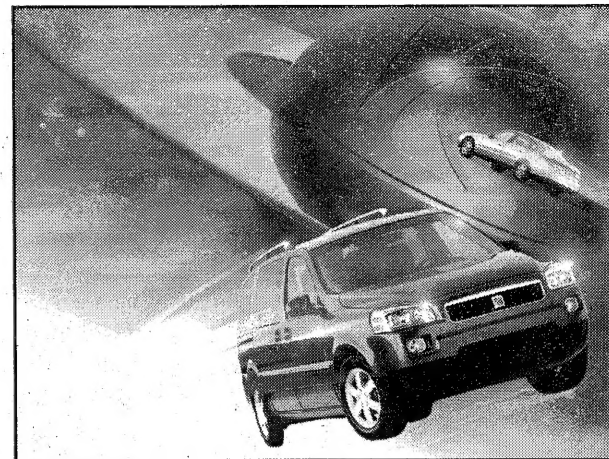


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I don't know what would be worse, working for a rental company with the nutcase drivers or working for a taxi company and driving hard for 24 hours a day.

"I couldn't do either one," Sylvia says. "I'd be broken down all the time in either job."

"Can't have a pretty little thing like you broke down," Edgar chuckles. Did I mention he's something of a charmer?

"Now me, I was a work truck for twenty years before someone decided to have me put to pasture," he reminds us.

I've always been a family car, so I figure I've got it pretty good. I have one driver and I don't have to worry about people messing with my buttons or changing seat heights and mirrors all the time. My person is also a non-smoker so I don't have the issues with cigarette stains on my windows like Dusty has. Her person must be a chain smoker. He comes out to the car every time he has a smoke break and it seems like he's always cleaning her windows. Glad I don't have that problem.

Everyone's getting their hours messed up lately, so we don't have our regular group activities like we used to. Sometimes, cars have to leave early or they just don't show up on days where they used to. My person got her hours moved back so I don't sit all night in the parking lot anymore. In fact, I should be leaving within an hour or so.

Between the shift in hours and the loss of some of the group, it just doesn't seem the same here in the old Walmart parking lot. Sylvia tells me it won't last though. She should know as her person has been working here forever.

"It goes in cycles," she said once. "Give it a month or so and things will settle down and we'll all have our regular hours again."

Personally, I don't mind the earlier hours so much. It's given me a chance to get to know my cousin Seymour and I get home at a decent hour for a change. Still, I do miss hanging with friends. Speaking of friends... "Where's Franny?" I ask.

"Her person went on overnight," Edgar replies. "She won't be here till 10 o'clock."

Well that's a bummer. I miss her accent, sometimes. She's a BMW all the way from Stuttgart, Germany.

The parking lot seems busier than usual tonight. It's almost packed full. For some reason, the store decided to start the Christmas shopping season a little early and the sales are bringing in cars from all over. I see a lot of Nebraska plates in the lot, more than usual.

"Wish they'd finish with one holiday before they start hawking the next," Sylvia moans. "It's like they hadn't finished the Halloween stuff before they started putting up Christmas decorations."

"I'm gonna get real sick of Christmas music before December," Edgar adds. I just nod. My person doesn't even listen to the radio so I don't have to put up with Christmas music until she's in the holiday spirit. Usually she listens to CD's of classic rock.

Here comes Dusty's person for a smoke break again. That means it's almost time for me to go home. Usually, my person comes out before he's done smoking his cigarette. I'll be headed home and parked in a nice warm garage for the night.

Well anyway, it was good talking to you again. Drop by again when you have more time.

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Prayer to the Blessed Virgin (never known to fail). Oh most beautiful flower of Mr. Carmel, fruitful vine, splendor of Heaven, blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in my necessity. O star of the sea, help me and show me herein you are my Mother. O Holy Mary Mother of God, queen of Heaven and Earth, I humbly beseech thee from the bottom of my heart to succor me in my necessity. There are none that can withstand your power. O show me herein you are Mother. O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee. (3times) O Holy Mary, I place this cause in your hands. (3 times) Thank you for your mercy to me and mine. Amen. This prayer must be said for 3 consecutive days and after 3 days your request will be granted and the pray must be published.
Thank you. K.T.